

March 8, 2021

Dear Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

This testimony pertains to H.B. No. 6403 AN ACT REQUIRING LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL FOR THE MERGER OR CLOSING OF INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES,

and further relates to S.B. No. 824 AN ACT REQUIRING TRAINING FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BOARDS OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE.

To put it simply, H.B. No. 6403 centers on the question of power. Who should have the power to make such important decisions regarding our state's system of higher education? Only those who have been democratically elected. To allow otherwise undermines our system of democratic governance.

Regardless of whether the Students First Initiative is a good or bad idea, the power to decide about *any* consolidation effort should only rest with those who have been democratically elected. We must look at the bigger picture. We must look to the future. We must maintain our system of democratic governance. It really is that simple.

One of the many values of democracy is that it upholds accountability. In thinking beyond mergers and/or closings, the BOR holds extraordinary power as their decisions impact education (in)equity, student services, and curriculum. In order to uphold accountability and secure the integrity of higher education in Connecticut, our elected officials must also require that all BOR members be properly qualified and trained. This, too, is simply common sense.

Thank you for your time. I tried to keep it short!

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